
Title: The Wild Girl of the Forest

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Her name was
Leyla, she said, and
her hair was braided
wild with creepers
and thorns. I
marveled that they
did not hurt her, but
when I asked, she but
shrugged and let her
eyes roam once more
across the woods.
Though I had my
hands securely
fastened by her
ropes, I itched to
reach out and comb
that unruly golden
mane, dirtied and
leaf-ridden.

Her provenance,
she told me over
nights illumined by
campfires, was once
the city of Trinsic.
She claimed to have
been kidnapped and
raised by orcs, which
I judged an unlikely
tale, for all know orcs
delight in eating the
meat of honest folk.
When I told her this,
she laughed a fey
laugh, and gaily
admitted that honest
she was not, for oft
had she stolen folk
away from caravans
to loot their
possessions from an
unconscious body!

At this, I began to
fear for my life, and
her smile seemed full
of teeth sharper than
a human ought to
have, for the tale of
orcish raising had

struck fear into the
marrow of my bones.
"Wilt thou eat me?" I
asked, a-tremble,
fearing the answer.

And she cocked
her head at me, like a
wild animal facing a
word that it dost not
understand, and the
fixity in her eyes
was a glimpse into
the deeper reaches of
the Abyss. But she
finally grunted, and
said, "Nay," in a
voice that recalled to
me a child. "Nay,"
she said, "for thou
dost remind me of a
boy I knew once,
when I was a girl
who played in a city
of great sandstone
walls, before I was
taken. He had sandy
hair like thee, and I
dreamt as a child of
holding his hand and
sharing flavored ice.
His name was
Japheth."

The next morning
she let me go,
stripped of my pouch
and clothes, and bade
me run through the
woods, and to fear
recapture, for surely
her heart would not
soften again. 'Twas a
fearful run, and I
came to the road to
Yew with welts and
scratches run
rampant crost my
skin, but I did not see
her again.

Oft have I
wondered of the boy
named Japheth, and
whether he
remembers a girl who
lived in sandstone
walls. The only
Japheth I know is the
Guildmaster of
Paladins who died

last year warring
amidst the orcs, and
though he had indeed
sandy hair, I cannot
picture him side by
side with a feral girl
whose tongue has
tasted of human
flesh.

Yet the paths of
fate are strange
indeed, and I suppose
'tis possible that this
paladin died
defending his
remembered lady's
honor, unknowingly
struck down by the
orc that she called
father.